

CARA HIGHLIGHT

WENZEL & MAESHIMA – RUNNING RESEARCHERS

By Trisha Dean

Hans Wenzel and Kaori Maeshima, both experimental physicists at Fermilab in Batavia, have each added “marathoner” to their already impressive resumes. These Warrenville residents are members of CARA as well as the Lisle Windrunners, Fox Valley Runners, and Sunjoy Track Club, and they have logged at least four marathons between them.

Wenzel, age 41, was born in Germany and has been in the United States for about 10 years. He first came to the U.S. to work on an experiment at Fermilab. He plans to continue living in the States and has just applied for a “green card,” although eventually he might work on another experiment in Geneva, Switzerland. “In high-end physics, it may take a decade to build an experiment,” he explained.

Running in high school while living in Germany, Wenzel ran “as a hobby” for many years, and started running more seriously three years ago. He runs all distances “from short to long,” and until recently, preferred the 800-meter distance. His PR in the 5K is 17:59.

Moving up to a much longer distance, Wenzel completed The LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon in 2000, 2001, and 2002. His best time to date is 3:14:19. “Since I’m only three years into it, I hope I can still do better,” he said.

Wenzel is the only runner in his family. “I seem to be the black sheep of the family” when it comes to running, he said. Always interested in physics, Wenzel attended college in Germany, where his parents and two brothers still reside.

Maeshima, who just turned 50 and is entering a new age group, started working at Fermilab in 1990. It was there she met Wenzel when they were working on the same experiment. She is currently the operations manager for an experiment at Fermilab. Originally from Nagano, Japan, where her family still lives, Maeshima went to college in the San Francisco area and worked there and in Geneva, Switzerland before coming to the Chicago area.

The 1991 Chicago Marathon was Maeshima’s distance-running debut. While living in California she had taken advantage of the nice weather and played many sports, especially tennis,

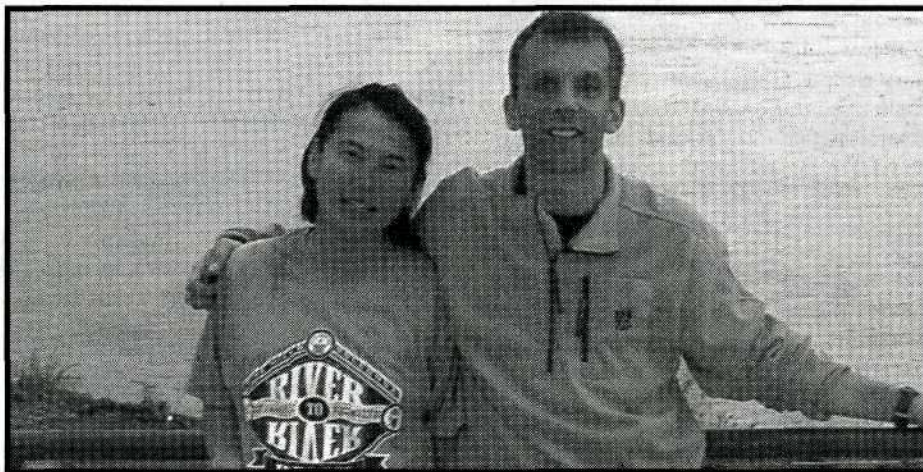
but she didn’t really start running until she moved to the Chicago area.

Unfortunately after running the marathon, Maeshima suffered a torn ACL (knee ligament). She went through rehab, but didn’t start running seriously until about two and a half years ago.

Wenzel encouraged Maeshima to become involved in Tai Kwan Do and Judo, and they both were avid participants in the martial arts from 1994-1998. Then, with Wenzel’s support, Maeshima rekindled her interest in running.

She and Wenzel participated in almost every CARA Circuit race last year. Maeshima finished the Cary March Madness Half-Marathon (no longer on the Circuit) this past March, her longest continuous run since the marathon. She did complete the Green Bay Half-Marathon last year, but her ailing knee forced her to walk part of it.

Maeshima would like to get back to running marathons, though she and Wenzel agree



Hans Wenzel and Kaori Maeshima enjoy racing almost every weekend.

their main goals this year are to run the CARA Circuit races. The CARA circuit, according to Maeshima, hosts races that are “usually well-organized, well-marked, and the timing is good.” But their racing isn’t limited to the Circuit. “We do races every weekend and have fun,” she said.

Running three LaSalle Bank Shamrock Shuffles in a row, Maeshima has improved by three minutes each year. Her goal, like Wenzel, is to continue to improve her times.

Maeshima is the mother of a daughter, age 20, who is currently a math student at the University of Illinois. Although not a serious runner, her daughter enjoys 5K races such as the Zoo Run. Maeshima and her daughter ran the Race That’s Good for Life 5K in Oak Park last year as a mother/daughter team.

“I really like running kind of people,” Maeshima said. “I really admire people in their 60s and 70s who run. It is really encouraging to see those people run. I would like to be fit at that age.”